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Atari Online News, Etc.
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->From the Editor's Keyboard
"*****"

"Saying it like it is!"

Well, my week's sojourn of bachelorhood has ended. Not that I was partying every night - far from it! My wife had a great time, and got plenty of rest. She brought me plenty of souvenirs, including the cold that she caught from her mother. So, I've been under the weather all week.

I was going to discuss current affairs this week, but Joe handled that pretty well. So, I'll just offer a few comments if you'll allow me just a few moments on the proverbial soapbox.

The economy sucks! Sum that up fairly well? Why you might ask? Well, I'm no economist, and I can talk as good a game as the next guy. But I have a couple of reasons: the greed of the banking industry (mortgage companies and other lending businesses) and the stupidity of the average consumer.

It seems that until lately, if you wanted money, there was someone who was willing to lend it to you. Want a 500 thousand dollar house? Sure, you qualify for a mortgage - sign here! How can people loan money to people who cannot possibly afford to repay it; and how can people think that they can afford these ridiculous mortgage payment plans? It just doesn't make sense to me.

It's time for common sense and a dose of the reality stick to whomp some real changes into people. Otherwise, we're doomed into a financial nightmare never seen before. And to think that America is the light to which the rest of the world looks. We need to get back to that point again. Off my soapbox.

Until next time...

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PEOPLE ARE TALKING
compiled by Joe Mirando
joe@atarinews.org

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. Well, again this week there aren't enough messages to make a good column, so they'll go in the pile to add to next week in the hopes that there will be a resurgence of UseNet activity.

In the meantime, I'd like to talk a little bit about the current financial crisis.

At this point, it seems fairly certain that whoever ends up winning the election here in the United States, they are going to inherit a mess, not only because of the country's sagging prestige around the world, but because of failure of financial institutions recently.

Right now, we're looking at more than 1.1 TRILLION dollars in bail-outs. And like my grandfather used to say, a trillion here and a trillion there, and pretty soon you're talkin' about real money.

There are those in the business of finance who will tell you that this is a 'correction' to the markets and that these institutions are paying the price because they either made bad decisions or got caught unaware of changing market conditions.

Bull. These are companies who have taken things 'right to the limit' of what's legal, way, way past the bounds of common sense. There's a little monologue that Al Pacino's character gives in the movie "Devil's Advocate" that seems to fit the situation pretty well, but the language the character uses is not well-suited for use here.

In any event, we'll be talking about who's to blame, who was asleep at the switch and who profited from this disaster. And make no mistake, this is a disaster. It may not be, as some news outlets have billed it, the biggest disaster since the Great Depression, but there is a great danger looming here that I don't think the financial geniuses have come to terms with yet.

This whole circumstance is something like a financial shell game. While we're so worried that our mortgages, our fraction-of-a-percent savings accounts and our retirement accounts are in peril, we've largely neglected to notice that the financial institutions and the stock market rollercoaster are basically sump-pumping money out of our economy and dumping it into private hands.

Yeah, I saw that double-take you just did... but think about it: Institutions like Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac (and even though they are private corporations, they are being bailed out by public funds because allowing them to fail would cause even more damage in the short term) fail and get supported by public funds. Fine. That keeps the sky from falling on the housing market. But what happened to the funds that these institutions had in their coffers originally? Sure, there were defaults on mortgages and bad investments and all that, but in reality, that's just part of the game. If you have to lose a billion to be able to pocket 100 million that you don't deserve, it's still worth it because it's not your money to begin with. It's like selling stolen merchandise at a deep discount... who cares? It didn't cost YOU anything to begin with.

Now we see it happening with Fannie and Freddie and we shake our heads, saying "how could something like this happen?"

Mortgage lenders are in financial trouble all over the place, and yet

other companies scramble to snap them up once there's a whiff of government support. Sump-pump.

Before Inauguration Day in January, I expect to see the same scenario played more in the financial world as the effects filter down into more companies and the Overlords sink their fangs into the jugular veins of more and more institutions. Then I expect it to spread to industry and transportation and, finally, to agriculture. You're going to be amazed at the companies that'll be in the news. Names we all know, but haven't heard a lot about lately.

Of course, everyone will blame the cost of fossil fuels, and that'll be accurate as far as it goes, but as usual, there'll be more going on beneath the surface, down there along the dark underbelly of institutions so large that their scope boggles the mind... where those in control benefit whether things work out for the rest of us or not.

In short (if this rambling diatribe can be called short), the Great Depression taught the powers that be that down-sides can be positive things. You can benefit from destroying a company or institution if you can get the government to jump in and pay you for, if not fixing it, at least minimizing the damage to everyone else. Mortgage lenders found this to be true when they realized they could make these pie-in-the-sky loans to people who were going to end up either defaulting or selling at a loss to just minimize the damage. Then, with the help and blessing of the federal government, they collect a fee for renegotiating these ridiculous loans that they made in the first place.

Of course, at the most basic level, the blame lays with the consumer. It still should be their responsibility to understand the risks and their responsibilities. There are those who will argue that it's the fault of the institutions for not explaining the in's and out's to their customers, or the government's fault for jumping in to save fools from themselves, but whether you blame the lender or lendee, the figures waiting in the shadows with their checkbooks at the ready are the ones who profit no matter what.

Well, that's enough of that, eh? Let's meet up again next week, same time, same station, and be ready to listen to what they're saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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Atari's Breathtaking The Witcher: Enhanced Edition

Atari is reaching new heights as it ships Wednesday *The Witcher: Enhanced Edition" for Windows to PC retailers across North America. The successor to The Witcher; which was billed by many as the Best RPG of 2007 and won numerous awards and accolades, "The Witcher: Enhanced Edition," developed by CD Projekt RED, is rated M for Mature and is available for the suggested retail price of \$39.99.

"We have really listened to what the fans wanted and have their best interests at heart. */The Witcher: Enhanced Edition/* has given us the opportunity to put their feedback into action as well as offer something totally new with exclusive content," said Adam Kicinski, CEO of CD Projekt RED. "The Witcher: Enhanced Edition" is truly an experience you won't want to miss, packed with gameplay improvements and additional physical value. We believe that it is definitely the ideal game for fans of PC role-playing."

Technical enhancements include faster loading times with improved combat responsiveness and precision. The enhanced version will feature two new adventures in the world of The Witcher offering hours of new content, as well as more than 200 new animation sequences, greater NPC (non-playable character) variety, an easier-to-use inventory and much more. Moreover, following feedback from fans, the English script has been re-worked, while extensive amounts of the voice-over has been re-recorded for the English and German versions - all to deliver an even more immersive and involving story experience. All of the enhancements will be available as a free download to existing game owners via the game's official website, www.thewitcher.com <<http://www.thewitcher.com/>>.

The deluxe package will also include:

- * Multilanguage "The Witcher: Enhanced Edition", a reworking of the best PC RPG of 2007;
- * DVD bonus disc including the D'jinni Adventure Editor and two brand new adventures created by CD Projekt RED:
 - o the D'jinni Adventure Editor: allows players to create or modify their own adventures in the world of */The Witcher/*;
 - o "The Price of Neutrality": the adventure tells the story of Geralt coming back to Kaer Morhen and finding a mysterious camp near the stronghold (featuring 3 new quests);
 - o "Side Effects": the first ever release of this new adventure which focuses on Geralt's close friend, Dandelion, and his troubles in Vizima Hidden List City (featuring 5 new quests);
- * Remastered "Making Of" DVD with never-before-seen bonus material;
- * "The Witcher" Official Soundtrack CD;
- * CD of original music inspired by "The Witcher";
- * Instruction manual available on disc and a physical game guide;
- * Short story by Andrzej Sapkowski featuring new monster artwork;
- * A map for exploration throughout "The Witcher"'s world.

Based on the universe created by best-selling Polish author Andrzej Sapkowski, "The Witcher" puts players in the role of Geralt, a professional monster slayer who exists on the fringes of a complex

society in a fantasy universe. Taken as a child, mutated, and trained in the arcane ways of the witchers, Geralt is a reluctant hero, who nonetheless finds himself all too frequently in the heat of battles that are not his own. In this world there is no right or wrong, only decisions and consequences. "The Witcher" has already garnered worldwide success, having sold over 800,000 copies, and has received more than 90 awards and distinctions, including the prestigious "Best PC RPG of 2007" from IGN.com, Gamespy.com, PC Gamer and more (for the full list of awards, please visit:
<http://www.thewitcher.com/community/pl/awards/>).

"Guitar Hero" Lines Up New Acts

With the much-anticipated "Rock Band 2" now on store shelves, rival franchise "Guitar Hero" is sneaking into the news on several fronts.

Most recently, Velvet Revolver guitarist Slash let it slip to Rolling Stone that "Guitar Hero" is working on a Jimi Hendrix special edition akin to what it did with Aerosmith. Metallica is another band previously identified as heading for its own "Guitar Hero" title. Both are expected after the holiday release of "Guitar Hero: World Tour."

Additionally, "Guitar Hero" publisher Activision reportedly is mulling a subscription service for adding downloadable songs to the game. Both the "Rock Band" and "Guitar Hero" franchises allow gamers to purchase either individual tracks, three-song packs or full albums via their game consoles and download them to play via the game.

Currently, all are a la carte options, but according to comments made by Activision Publishing CEO Mike Griffith during an analyst event, the company may offer a monthly fee good for a set number of songs.

Nearly Every Kid A Video Gamer

Katherine Graden doesn't really like shoot-'em-up video games. She prefers games on her Wii system that test her fitness and agility - the ones her guy friends tease are her "sissy games."

"I'm like, 'Fine! Go play your violent games. I'll stick with mine,'" the high school freshman from Chicago says, chuckling.

It's a common scenario, according to a new national survey from the Pew Internet & American Life Project that illustrates just how ingrained games have become in youth culture.

The survey found that while young Americans don't necessarily play the same thing, nearly all of them - girls included - play video games of one kind or another.

And they don't just play by themselves. Nearly two-thirds play video games to socialize face-to-face with friends and family, while just over a quarter said they play with Internet friends.

"It shows that gamers are social people," says Amanda Lenhart, a senior

researcher at Pew who led the report on the survey. "They communicate just as much. They spend time face-to-face, just as much as other kids. They e-mail and text."

The survey, released Tuesday, combined the telephone responses from a nationally representative sample of 1,102 young people, ages 12 to 17, and their parents. Performed from November 2007 through February of this year, and partly funded by the MacArthur Foundation, it had a margin of error of three percentage points.

- * Ninety-seven percent of young respondents play video games. That's 99 percent of boys and 94 percent of girls, with little difference in the percentages among various racial and ethnic groups and incomes. In fact, 7 percent of those surveyed said they didn't have a computer at home, but did have a game console, such as Sony Corp.'s PlayStation, Microsoft Corp.'s Xbox or Nintendo Co.'s Wii.

- * They play often. When surveyed, half of the respondents said they had played a video game the previous day.

- * Their games of choice are as diverse as their tastes in music or TV. Eighty percent of respondents play five or more different game genres, with racing, puzzles, sports and action the most common. Favorites were "Guitar Hero," "Halo 3," "Madden NFL," solitaire and "Dance Dance Revolution."

- * Young people are routinely able to get their hands on games that are rated "M" (for mature) or "AO" (adults only). Three-quarters of parents who were surveyed said they "always" or "sometimes" check the ratings on their kids' games. And yet, half of boys who were questioned listed a game with an "M" or "AO" rating as one of their favorites, compared with 14 percent of girls.

Regardless, Pew researchers said they want to steer clear of depicting video games as "good" or "bad," says Joseph Kahne, a study co-author and dean of the education school at Mills College in California.

He noted, for instance, that even games with violent content, such as "Halo," provided "more than average opportunities for players to help one another."

Kahne also looked at games' effect on civic engagement, anything from political involvement to raising money for charity. He found that those who spent the most time playing video games weren't any less likely to be involved in their communities.

The survey did, however, find that those who played games in face-to-face social settings were more likely to say they were committed to civic participation.

Mimi Ito, an anthropologist who studies the use of new media, said more research is needed to explain this phenomenon. But she speculates the ties that gamers make with "real-life local friends" stimulate civic engagement.

"Gaming is the reason to get together - but they're probably talking about other things," says Ito, who's based at the University of Southern California's Annenberg Center of Communication.

For this and other reasons, Ito cautioned parents against negative

stereotypes about video games.

How young people play a game, she says, is as important as what they play.

To that end, Jesse Schell, a professor of entertainment technology at Carnegie Mellon University, hoped the report would encourage parents to learn more about the video games their children play.

"If more parents would take the time to play the same things their children are playing - or even better, play with them - it would benefit both parents and children," says Schell, who teaches video game design.

About a third of parents who were surveyed said they play video games with their children some or all of the time. Most of those parents are younger than 40, part of a generation that grew up playing video games themselves.

Kimberly Coleman, a 35-year-old mom and blogger in New York City, was a fan of "Pac-Man" and "Donkey Kong" as a kid. She now plays video games with her 4-year-old son, but only those with physical activity, such as Wii Sports, or an educational component.

"Growing up with video games made me more hesitant to have a gaming system in our home," says Coleman, who doesn't want her kids to become "couch potatoes."

That's why Graden, back in Chicago, likes her Wii Fit. She's also started playing "Guitar Hero" with her buddies, though, though she's a little miffed it has only a few girl characters. "They dress, like, really sleazy," she says. "It's sort of weird."

Graden also plays the Wii with her mom, but only after she hits the books and practices her French horn.

"For me," she says, "it's always schoolwork first."

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A-ONE's Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

Sarah Palin's E-Mail Hacked, Personal Mail Posted

Web-based e-mail users take note: Use strong passwords. The private e-mail account of Republican vice presidential candidate and Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin was apparently hacked earlier this week, and screen captures of e-mail messages, family photos, and the e-mail inbox were posted on a Web site.

The alleged screenshots were published on the Wikileaks Web site, which publishes leaked government, corporate and religious documents and protects the identity of the sources. From there, the e-mail spread throughout the Internet.

Hacking into an e-mail account may be punishable by up to five years in prison under federal law. Local statutes may also have been broken.

According to a report in the Register, a proxy server operated by Ctunnel.com in Fairbanks, Alaska, was used to anonymously attack the Yahoo account. IP addresses from incoming users are allegedly held in cache on the Ctunnel server at another facility in Chicago and could identify the hacker.

In fact, in a post discovered on a hacker-oriented Web site, a user named "rubico" posted, "THIS [hack into Palin's account] was serious business, yes I was behind a proxy, only one ... I didn't know how to [download] all that stuff, so I posted the pass[word], and then promptly deleted everything."

Getting to the Chicago server may not be problematic for the FBI or Secret Service. Charles Silverman, a Chicago-based attorney, said it all depends on whether the government wanted a warrant or a subpoena. "The main difference being that warrants need probable cause, whereas subpoenas merely need reasonable suspicion," he said.

Legal consequences for the hacker may be dire. Silverman said, "If the e-mail search or release was done in a threatening manner, or seemed designed to intimidate or release potential security information, then the Secret Service could make an arrest. If this was done for embarrassment and/or political gain, then it would be solely FBI jurisdiction. I suspect that the Secret Service is part of the investigation to see if there was an attempt to find security information, then the perpetrators would be guilty of the inchoate crime of attempted harm and/or conspiracy to harm."

When we contacted the Chicago facility, an associate at FDC Servers, Peter Karl, had no knowledge of any authorities requesting access. "We have over 3,000 servers here," Karl said. "The authorities would have to contact the server owner. We have no access to their data."

Much scrutiny has been focused on Gov. Palin since her nomination to be the running mate of Republican presidential candidate Sen. John McCain. Last night the McCain campaign released a terse statement condemning the hack.

Reporters at The New York Times, The Washington Post and the Associated Press have speculated about Palin's use of a private Yahoo account to conduct Alaska business, yet the posted e-mails appear to be personal, with no government content. Family photos were also posted on the Internet.

"rubico's" post concluded, "I read though the emails ... ALL OF THEM ... before I posted, and what I concluded was anticlimactic, there was nothing there, nothing incriminating, nothing that would derail her campaign as I had hoped."

How Sarah Palin's Email Was Hacked

Breaking into Gov. Sarah Palin's webmail account was a simple hack - one that required little to no technical expertise. There is, of course, an

important lesson to be learned here for the vice presidential candidate, and hopefully the rest of us can take something away from this as well.

The attack was perpetrated by 4Chan's "random" /b/ board. The board has long been at the forefront of Internet memeology, helping popularize such favorites as lolcats, Rick-rolling, and the "Anonymous" group, which has been known to launch its share of large-scale anti-Scientology protests.

On Tuesday night, someone from the /b/ board ("/b/tards," as they are colloquially known) broke into Sarah Palin's Yahoo! e-mail account. They read the e-mails and posted the address and password on the board. Fellow /b/tards proceeded to wreak general havoc with the account.

The /b/tard in question used Yahoo!'s password recovery feature, and then proceeded to fill in the answers using Wikipedia. A message posted to the forum explains the process thusly:

"After the password recovery was reenabled, it took seriously 45 mins on wikipedia and google to find the info, Birthday? 15 seconds on wikipedia, zip code? well she had always been from wasilla, and it only has 2 zip codes (thanks online postal service!)

"The second was somewhat harder, the question was "where did you meet your spouse?" did some research, and apparently she had eloped with mister palin after college, if youll look on some of the screenshits [sic] that I took and other fellow anon have so graciously put on photobucket you will see the google search for "palin eloped" or some such in one of the tabs.

"I found out later though more research that they met at high school, so I did variations of that, high, high school, eventually hit on "Wasilla high" I promptly changed the password to popcorn and took a cold shower...

Palin Hackers May Dodge Feds via DOJ Loophole

Could the hackers who infiltrated Republican vice presidential hopeful Sarah Palin's personal Yahoo account avoid prosecution thanks to a Department of Justice policy statement?

Though federal law prohibits the unauthorized access of someone's e-mail account, the DOJ's interpretation of one particular case might only hold the Palin hackers accountable for accessing unopened messages, according to the Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF).

Hackers obtained access to the Alaska governor's personal gov.palin@yahoo.com e-mail address this week after successfully navigating through Yahoo's password reset process. They changed the governor's password, took screen shots of the account's contents, accessed personal photographs, and sent all the data to the Wikileaks Web site.

Under the Stored Communication Act (SCA), it is illegal to access without permission a wire or electronic communication while it is in electronic storage. A 2003 case, Theofel v. Farey-Jones, ruled that electronic storage refers to e-mails that have been read, as well as

those that are unopened.

The DOJ, however, is not a huge fan of the Theofel decision.

The agency's computer crimes and intellectual property division "continues to question whether Theofel was correctly decided, since little reason exists for treating old email differently than other material a user may choose to store on a network," according to the DOJ's Prosecuting Computer Crimes Manual.

"The term 'electronic storage' has a narrow, statutorily defined meaning. It does not simply mean storage of information by electronic means," according to the DOJ. "If the communication has been received by a recipient's service provider but has not yet been accessed by the recipient, it is in electronic storage. When the recipient retrieves the email or voice mail, however, the communication reaches its final destination. If the recipient chooses to retain a copy of the communication on the service provider's system, the retained copy is no longer in electronic storage."

Under DOJ's interpretation, the Palin hackers might only be prosecuted for accessing e-mails the Alaska governor had not yet opened. Based on the data leaked by the hackers, it is not clear if they opened any unread messages.

"What happened to Gov. Palin shows why Theofel is good for privacy," EFF senior staff attorney Kurt Opsahl wrote in a Thursday blog post. "As more and more people use Web mail like Yahoo, Gmail, Hotmail, and others, they also will naturally leave opened e-mail on the server. People should not have to sacrifice their privacy protections under the law when they do so."

Andrew Grossman, a senior legal policy analyst at the Heritage Foundation, suggested that simply accessing Palin's account is enough of a violation to warrant some jail time.

"Federal law prohibits virtual trespassing for the purposes of stealing information," Grossman wrote in a Thursday blog post. "So cracking the password to a governor's e-mail account and perusing her messages is a clear violation. The punishment: criminal fines and imprisonment of up to 5 years."

The McCain campaign condemned the hacking as "a shocking invasion of the governor's privacy and a violation of law." The FBI and Secret Service are reportedly investigating.

The Yahoo account has since been deleted.

Palin has made headlines for allegedly using her Yahoo account to conduct state business, a move that could run afoul of transparency laws. The e-mails published by the hackers display conversations Palin had with two administration officials, but they do not appear to discuss official state business.

The use of this account, however, made its way into an information request from Andree McLeod, former vice chair of the Alaska Republican party.

McLeod asked Palin's office on September 8 to release e-mails the governor sent from her state account - without any of the information

redacted - as well as constituent e-mails to Palin, and e-mails that Frank Bailey, the director of Boards of Commission, and Ivy Frye, Palin's assistant, sent to Palin's Yahoo account.

In July, McLeod requested that Palin's office provide her with copies of all land-line and cell phone, text message, e-mail and leave request records that pertained to Bailey and Frye because McLeod suspected that Bailey and Frye were conducting campaign business on state time.

Palin's office handed over the documents, but information the governor's office considered to be sensitive was blacked out, while 1,100 additional messages were withheld. By law, only members of the state's executive branch were privy to that information, according to her office.

McLeod noticed, however, that 40 of the withheld e-mails were sent to Palin's husband Todd, who is not a member of the state's executive branch.

McLeod reasoned in her September 8 letter that she should have access to anything to which Todd Palin had access since they are both private citizens.

The Yahoo account is also fair game because "almost all of [Palin's] e-mails have been sent by or to [Palin] at gov.palin@yahoo.com, [her] unprotected private citizen e-mail account outside the state server and the server's security system, rather than to or from [her] official office of the governor e-mail address," according to the letter, which was published by Mother Jones magazine.

U.S. Needs Cybersecurity Plan, Experts Tell House

U.S. cyber-security efforts are a disjointed, disorganized mess, experts told a House intelligence committee Thursday.

"Our current information infrastructure is riddled with holes, unknown backdoors, and is extremely difficult to protect in the face of increasingly sophisticated adversaries," Paul Kurtz, a partner with Good Harbor Consulting and a member of the Center for Strategic and International Studies' Commission on Cybersecurity.

CSIS established the commission last year. It is co-chaired by Reps. Jim Langevin, D-R.I., and Michael McCaul, R-Texas, and also includes members from IBM, Oracle, Cisco, and Microsoft, among others.

The commission is expected to issue a report on its findings in November, but provided an early look at that data to the House Committee on Intelligence. Several speakers published prepared remarks to the Web.

Commission member Amit Yoran, chief executive of NetWitness and former director of the Homeland Security Department's cyber-security division, said that DHS "lacks the personnel, capability, authority, and culture required to do the job entrusted to them by the President and Congress."

"DHS' cyber efforts are disorganized and disjointed and practical operations continue to be buried deeper within the organization," Yoran said.

Furthermore, the government lacks a comprehensive, national strategy to

guard against cyber attacks, and deploys an "overly broad" definition of critical infrastructures, which "risks diluting scarce resources," he said.

Yoran urged the next administration to modernize federal tech authorities like the Federal Information Security Management Act, which was intended to bolster computer and network security in the government, and the Clinger-Cohen Act, which calls on the government to operate like a business when it comes to IT purchases.

He also pushed for additional funding for cyber-security research.

"Only in very rare instances is the private sector making significant investment in cybersecurity research," according to Yoran.

Coordination with outside agencies and the private sector is also problematic. "The intelligence community is not particularly adept at interacting with entities outside of the intelligence community," Yoran said.

The highly classified nature of some data "causes great impediments" when trying to share it with those who might be affected, he said.

Kurtz also encouraged Congress to fund the Comprehensive National Cybersecurity Initiative (CNCI), a classified group within the White House intended to improve collaboration across the federal government on cyber security.

CNCI "is a worthy - if belated - start on establishing and coordinating stronger cyber security programs across the federal government," Kurtz said. "Even with the CNCI's shortcomings, Congress should fund the initiative. Without adequate funding, the federal government will continue to fall behind in our efforts to set the foundations to build a more secure, reliable, resilient information infrastructure."

Circuit Behind The Internet Age Turns 50 Years Old

The computer chip industry on Friday celebrated the 50th birthday of the integrated circuit, a breakthrough that set the stage for the Internet and the Digital Age.

A half-century ago a young engineer named Jack Kilby first demonstrated an integrated circuit he designed while working through the summer at his Texas Instruments job because he didn't have enough vacation time for a holiday.

Kilby used a sliver of conductive germanium to connect a transistor and other bits, dubbing the soldered assembly an "integrated circuit" (IC).

Engineer Robert Noyce was designing his own IC "in parallel" at Fairchild Semiconductor but didn't debut his creation until about six months later. Noyce went on to found US chip making giant Intel in 1968.

While Kilby was the first to demonstrate an IC, Noyce came up with a design that could be mass produced, according to Leslie Berlin, project historian for Stanford Silicon Valley Archives and author of a book about Noyce.

"It was an idea whose time had come," Berlin told AFP. "There were efforts all over the world to make something like an integrated circuit."

History gives Noyce and Kilby shared credit for inventing the circuit that transformed the world of electronics.

"The IC was an idea so revolutionary, so life-changing, we don't even remember the world before it came along," Texas Instruments chief executive Rich Templeton said at a ceremony honoring Kilby.

"And we can't imagine life without it."

The year Kilby demonstrated his circuit, computers were colossal machines that filled rooms and were commanded by coded punch cards.

Televisions featured black-and-white pictures and few channels. The only telephones were wired in place. There were no iPods, flat-screen televisions, Internet searches or laptop computers.

Integrated circuits replaced vacuum tubes; bulky bulbs that guzzle electricity, spew heat and burn out.

The circuits became building blocks for microprocessors, the increasingly powerful and compact chips that are the brains behind the Internet and most of today's "smart" electronic devices.

"It's been only 50 years, but think of the dramatic improvements in everything we do around the world today," Intel spokesman Bill Calder told AFP.

"In the scheme of inventions, certainly the integrated circuit has to be one of the greatest inventions of our time. This world of bytes we live in today would not be possible without them."

Berlin says that integrated circuits are at the core of the microchip industry mantra of "smaller, faster, cheaper" and can likely be found in anything with an on-off switch.

Kilby was awarded a Nobel Prize in physics in 2000 for his invention. It is believed a Nobel Prize would have also been given to Noyce, who died in 1990 at the age of 62. Kilby was 81 when he died in 2005.

"The integrated circuit has proved to be the single most important driver of increased productivity and economic growth in history," said Semiconductor Industry Association president George Scalise.

"The integrated circuit provides the critical technology for countless electronic devices that enable people everywhere to lead more productive lives."

The semiconductor industry is on track to post 265 billion dollars in sales this year, according to Scalise.

Templeton described Kilby as quick to credit successors for turning integrated circuits into the power driving Internet Age technologies.

It is said that Kilby responded to people making "a big fuss" over his work by quoting fellow Nobel Prize winner Charles Townes:

"When I hear that kind of thing, it reminds me of what the beaver told

the rabbit as they stood at the base of Hoover Dam: 'No, I didn't build it myself, but it's based on an idea of mine.' "

Texas Instruments is planning a new research center to be christened "Kilby Labs."

"Jack Kilby was a hero, an artist, a philanthropist, a genius and a real believer in the power of the imagination," Templeton said.

"And his invention is a reminder of the responsibility that we, as engineers, have in making ours a better world."

When once asked by a mother what can be done to help children invent new things, Kilby reportedly replied "Read them fairytales."

Microsoft Unveils 'Wave 3' Windows Live Betas

Microsoft on Wednesday opened "Wave 3" of its Microsoft Windows Live programs to the general public, together with new versions of Live Mail, Writer, and Messenger.

All told, the new betas include Live versions of Messenger, Mail, Photo Gallery, Movie Maker, Writer, Toolbar, and Family Safety.

The new betas will go live later on Wednesday, according to Chris Jones, the lead the program management team for Windows Live. Jones made the announcement via a blog post on the official Windows Live blog hosted by Microsoft.

The first wave of Live applications included Hotmail, Messenger, and Space, and were released in 2006. The second wave tied the PC to the Web, and included Photo Gallery, Mail, Writer, Events, SkyDrive, Calendar, and Family Safety. Jones did not say what the design goals were for the new software, but added that updates to the Windows Live blog would lay out those goals in the coming weeks.

"We have spent the last year working on our next major wave of releases for Windows Live," Jones wrote. "This wave is part of our ongoing work to build a great set of communication and sharing experiences that help keep your life in sync. This wave includes significant updates to our software applications for your Windows PC."

Jones did not give a timetable for when the beta Live software would be available in a final version for general release.

eBay Looking To Unload StumbleUpon?

eBay's tie-up with StumbleUpon may be about to tumble.

According to a report in TechCrunch, eBay has hired Deutsche Bank to handle a sale of its Web site discovery service StumbleUpon, which it acquired a little over a year ago for roughly \$75 million.

StumbleUpon takes a gander at the Web sites that people have visited and

makes recommendations about other sites and videos that they may like.

In the report, TechCrunch cites a source who says that eBay is hoping to use Deutsche Bank to land the "right buyer," though the asking price is unknown and uncertainty exists whether the online retailing giant will be able to get what it paid, or will have to run the proverbial blue light special.

According to the report:

In July, StumbleUpon had 1.3 million worldwide visitors and 25 million page views. Twelve months earlier, the service attracted 4.4 million visitors and 31 million page views (ComScore).

StumbleUpon currently has more than 6 million registered users.

Internet Group Sues US Government for Electronic Eavesdropping

A non-profit Internet rights group on Thursday filed a lawsuit against the George W. Bush administration for what it called the "massively illegal" surveillance of Americans' emails and telephone calls without court-issued warrants.

The suit was filed by the Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF), which took the administration to task for what it argued is "illegal surveillance of millions of ordinary Americans."

EFF lawyers filed a suit against AT&T in 2006 charging the US telecom giant of opening its network to National Security Agency (NSA) agents without proper warrants to scour communications.

In the summer, Congress passed legislation granting US telecommunications firms immunity from domestic spying lawsuits.

Wrangling about the constitutionality of that act has stalled the AT&T lawsuit as well as a slew of similar litigation aimed at other telecommunications firms.

EFF lawyers said Thursday that the new lawsuit is aimed squarely at government officials, thereby sidestepping the immunity act.

"Our goal in this new case against the government, as in our case against AT&T, is to dismantle this dragnet surveillance program as soon as possible," said EFF senior staff attorney Kevin Bankston.

"For years, the NSA has been engaged in a massive and massively illegal fishing expedition through AT&T's domestic networks and databases of customer records."

Harvard Professor Sees Answers to Nagging Web-Youth Issues

John Palfrey, one of Harvard's leading thinkers on the Internet, has recently finished a study on kids raised in the digital age. He now has a few tips to share about Web porn, online piracy, and Sen. John

McCain's lack of tech know-how.

Palfrey, a Harvard law professor and director of the school's Berkman Center for Internet & Society, visited CNET's headquarters on Tuesday to discuss the findings of a recent study of a group he calls "digital natives." These are people who don't know life before cell phones, computers, and the Internet.

Palfrey, who wrote a book about the study called Born Digital, was fairly upbeat about the Web's affects on young people. That's not going to surprise too many people as Palfrey is a recognized Internet booster. But after completing 100 "in-depth interviews" with young people, ages 13 to 22, Palfrey sees some possible solutions to problems confronting Web-connected youth.

Kids steal music, according to Palfrey's study. "It's plain that virtually every young person we talked to gets music exactly the same way, which is they are downloading from an Internet site. The vast majority are downloading it illegally from a file-sharing site. A very small number are downloading and paying for it."

Palfrey found that the music industry isn't popular with young people and they believe they're "sticking it to the man" when they pirate music. Their attitudes changed when they perceived themselves to be doing harm to some other person.

"I'm completely convinced that the answer in the long-term sense is to encourage kids to be in the posture of a creator themselves," Palfrey said. "You get kids to say 'What is it like to take some content from somebody else? Once they get in a posture of being an artist, which so many kids are on a daily basis in some respects, I think there is great promise in their willingness to empathize with creators when they are creators themselves."

Efforts by the Motion Picture Association of America and Recording Industry Association of America to educate young people, which were largely just-say-no strategies, have thus far been ineffective, Palfrey said, adding that he's created a curriculum to foster this empathy in art, civics or music classes.

He had some tips to the news media about teens and young people. His study revealed what people already knew; they aren't reading The New York Times or watching broadcast TV news but they are still interested in being informed.

Teens are divided into three categories, Palfrey said. The first group likes to scan headlines and links. The second will click on the links and read full stories, and the third category will read stories and post comments or blog about it. Palfrey said that those media companies that are engaging readers by allowing them to post comments and feedback will fare better than those that don't.

Porn and violence are available to youth more than ever thanks to digital technology, Palfrey said. This is very scary to parents, and he acknowledges that in many ways they should be concerned.

"I tell parents to get in the game," Palfrey said. "To the extent that you're not familiar with the technologies, it's about making that first step. Let your student be the guide. They will happily show you their friends' MySpace page or what a blog is. Making that first connection

when you are then in the conversation opens up so many possibilities. Too many parents just say 'I don't get this' and are pretending it's not happening or not participating at all. I think this is very destructive over the long term."

During the talk with the audience at CNET, Palfrey was asked about statements made by McCain, the Republic presidential hopeful. McCain has said that he doesn't know how to get online. Palfrey responded that he didn't wish to make a political statement but that he didn't know how anyone lacking a rudimentary grasp of the Web and technology can lead this country effectively - not when cyberwarfare, surveillance, and security are so grounded in tech.

Palfrey called McCain's lack of Web knowledge "pathetic."

Congress Eyes Restrictions on Exporting E-waste

Electronic waste is still being exported to other nations, a move that has negative environmental consequences and may run afoul of federal law, government auditors told Congress on Wednesday.

Environmental Protection Agency regulations over e-waste exports are very limited, according to a new report from the Government Accountability Office, and the existing regulations are not well-enforced.

E-waste is "a low priority for EPA," John Stephenson, director of natural resources and environment for the GAO, told politicians on Wednesday at a hearing of the House Foreign Affairs' subcommittee on Asia, the Pacific, and the Global Environment.

The EPA's e-waste regulations cover only old cathode ray tube (CRT) televisions and monitors. Meanwhile, other exported used electronics, such as computers, printers, and cell phones, "flow virtually unrestricted" into other countries, the report said. A substantial amount of exported e-waste ends up in countries like China and India, where it is improperly handled, potentially exposing people to toxins like lead, if the material is disposed of improperly.

Not only are the EPA rules narrow, but they apparently are poorly enforced and easily circumvented. The rules covering CRTs went into effect in January 2007, and since then, only one company has been fined for violating them. However, by posing as foreign CRT buyers, the GAO says it found 43 U.S. companies readily willing to ignore the regulations.

"The EPA told us there were no plans for an enforcement strategy," Stephenson said.

Subcommittee Chairman Rep. Eni Faleomavaega, a Democrat from American Samoa, said, "These companies essentially trick consumers into thinking they are doing the right thing by recycling their electronics."

Faleomavaega claimed that the impending switch to digital-television broadcasting, scheduled for February 2009, could render millions of CRT televisions obsolete. (In reality, the DTV converter box works fine with analog televisions. Another option is for a broadcast TV viewer to sign up to receive cable or satellite TV on their old-fashioned CRTs.)

While it's true that some materials used in manufacturing can be health hazards, the volume of e-waste is relatively small. EPA data show that it represents less than a 10,000th of the more than 30 million tons of solid waste produced by the United States each day.

In addition, the EPA has sometimes been overly pessimistic. One 2003 study performed by researchers Timothy Townsend and Yong-Chul Jang of the University of Florida tested soil from 11 actual landfills that included color TVs, monitors, and circuit boards. They found that concentrations of lead that were less than 1 percent of that which the EPA's computer models had predicted.

Some politicians argued that exporting toxic e-waste to other countries - including CRT screens, which have a few pounds of lead used for shielding in each - will result in dangerous amounts of lead ending up in children's toys.

"They are getting the raw material from someplace," Stephenson said. (In reality, the Chinese also mine it. A report on ChinaMining.org says one company alone - not even the largest lead-mining outfit - will produce between 54,300 tons and 70,000 tons of lead this year.)

The GAO made three recommendations to mitigate the problem of exporting hazardous e-waste: the EPA should expand its definition of "hazardous" materials so it encompasses products that pose risk upon disassembly; the U.S. should improve its identification and tracking of imports to identify used electronics; and Congress should implement legislation to ratify the Basel Convention.

Stephenson said the first step is to "make it easier for recyclers to do the right thing, and make it competitive with illicit recyclers taking things overseas."

There is significant economic incentive for recycling companies to export hazardous e-waste because the need for raw materials in countries like China is driving up the demand for used electronics.

Rep. Diane Watson, D-Ca., also said, "The U.S. fails to hold manufacturers responsible for the end-of-life management of their products that contain toxic materials."

Not all companies are at fault, said Rep. Donald Manzullo, R-Ill., pointing out that Dell and Hewlett-Packard have programs to safely refurbish and recycle e-waste.

Some relief from the e-waste problem has also come from the United States, said Stephenson, noting that 17 states have landfill bans on e-waste.

Yet the fact remains, Stephenson said, that "we have a serious problem." Americans dispose of more than 300 million computers and electronics annually, "and this number is growing exponentially," Stephenson said.

"Nobody knows what to do with these," he added. "I have three used computers in my basement, and now I'm afraid to give them to a recycler."

Social networking sites are the hottest attraction on the Internet, dethroning pornography and highlighting a major change in how people communicate, according to a web guru.

Bill Tancer, a self-described "data geek," has analyzed information for over 10 million web users to conclude that we are, in fact, what we click, with Internet searches giving an up-to-date view of how society and people are changing.

Some of his findings are great trivia, such as the fact that elbows, belly button lint and ceiling fans are on the list of people's top fears alongside social intimacy and rejection.

Others give an indication of people's interests or emotions, with an annual spike in searches for anti-depression drugs around Thanksgiving time in the United States.

Tancer, in his new book, "Click: What Millions of People are Doing Online and Why It Matters," said analyzing web searches did not just reflect what was happening online but gave a wider picture of society and people's behavior.

"There are some patterns to our Internet use that we tend to repeat very specifically and predictably, from diet searches, to prom dresses, to what we do around the holidays," Tancer told Reuters in a telephone interview.

Tancer, general manager of global research at Hitwise, an Internet tracking company, said one of the major shifts in Internet use in the past decade had been the fall off in interest in pornography or adult entertainment sites.

He said surfing for porn had dropped to about 10 percent of searches from 20 percent a decade ago, and the hottest Internet searches now are for social networking sites.

"As social networking traffic has increased, visits to porn sites have decreased," said Tancer, indicated that the 18-24 year old age group particularly was searching less for porn.

"My theory is that young users spend so much time on social networks that they don't have time to look at adult sites."

Tancer said the change in communication patterns was one of the most noticeable shifts in society in the past five years - a key point for marketers seeking to learn about their audiences.

But analyzing data also showed what preoccupied people, allowing Tancer to predict the outcome of reality TV shows.

"I noticed in our data that some of the top search terms are about tropical storms in the United States," said Tancer.

"Before Hurricane Katrina rarely would you see a search on tropical storms but the devastation from Katrina has made us as a society much more sensitive to tropical storms."

Tancer said the current obsession with celebrities was also reflected

through web data, with celebrity websites garnering more attention than sites devoted to religion, politics, well-being and diets combined - and no sign that this is waning.

This celebrity mentality had also overlapped into the November presidential election in the United States with surfers looking for images of Republican vice presidential candidate Sara Palin rather than looking for her policies.

"A lot of the focus around the candidates in general is image based. People want to know how tall Barack Obama is and also to search for their families," he said.

"You have to get far down in the search terms to link the search for a candidate with any issue."

But Tancer said the speed at which information spread on the Internet had meant in some cases it was consumers generating the story and the media is last to record it - or fact-check it.

"With the explosion of this type of false information on the Internet I think we will see someone come forward and develop a new type of software that can filter for the most accurate information," he said.

"Maybe accuracy is the next thing we will all search for."

Berners-Lee Project Aims To Ensure 'One Web'

Web inventor Tim Berners-Lee on Sunday unveiled the World Wide Web Foundation, an initiative to spread the Web to developing countries and maintain its openness.

The organization, launched at the Newseum in Washington, D.C., is funded initially by a \$5 million grant from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation.

In a speech, Berners-Lee - a proponent of a "nondiscriminatory Internet" - said the creation of the foundation is necessary to ensure that the Web serves humanity by connecting people.

An academic program called the Web Science Research Initiative (WSRI) helps drive technology innovation. But the Web has largely been made by and for the developed world.

The Web Foundation will seek to foster collaboration among business leaders, technologists, government, academia, and nongovernmental organizations. The mission is to:

- * advance One Web that is free and open expand the Web's capability and
- * robustness extend the Web's benefits to all people on the planet

In his speech, Berners-Lee said the foundation is meant to address the social aspects of the Web to promote adoption around the world.

"But you cannot ethically turn your attention to developing it without also listening to those people who don't use the Web at all, or who could use it, if only it were different in some way. (I have read that

80 percent of the world does not have access to the Web.) The Web has been largely designed by the developed world, for the developed world. But it must be much more inclusive in order to be of greater value to us all," he said.

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